

memory of Javon Wilson and so many others to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

KATHARINE “KAPPY” SCATES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today I want to say a few words about one of the most admired members of my staff, Katharine “Kappy” Scates. Kappy is retiring at the end of the year. I don’t know what we will do without her. Oftentimes, public servants are in it for the accolades—not Kappy. She, in her own quiet way, just wanted to make a difference in people’s lives.

Since 1996, when I first ran for the U.S. Senate, Kappy has been my eyes and ears in southern Illinois. She is a retired elementary school teacher and a friend of my predecessor and mentor Senator Paul Simon. Kappy joined our campaign as a volunteer, and we all fell in love with her. She not only knew everybody, she was happy to drive the wheels off her car to be everywhere. In 1999, Kappy came to work for us in our Marion, IL, offices. She quickly became indispensable.

When it comes to southern Illinois, Kappy is a human rolodex. From Carmi to Cairo, Kappy Scates is a household name. On my behalf, Kappy met with countless people. She listened to their ideas and concerns—and did her best to help solve problems. And whatever the task, there isn’t a town in southern Illinois that Kappy can’t recruit a few folks to pitch in and help. People know that when you are on Kappy’s side, you are on the right side.

Let me give just one example. In Ridgway, IL, Kappy helped a dental clinic. It wasn’t easy; there were hurdles every step of the way. But Kappy would not take no for an answer. She got all the equipment and convinced hygienists and a part-time dentist to help out in this severely underserved community. I got the credit, but it was Kappy’s vision, hard work, and determination that made it happen.

I could go on about all those Kappy has helped, but let me tell just one story—about a housekeeper at a motel where I often stay. Years ago, at 62 years old, she told me that she had never in her life had health insurance—not for a single day. She had worked as a cook, waitress, and housekeeper, but had never known the security of having health insurance. She hadn’t even seen a doctor in over 20 years. Enter Kappy Scates. Kappy spent hours meeting with her and helping her figure out a solution. Finally, because of the Affordable Care Act and Kappy’s help signing her up—she was able to afford health insurance for the first time in her life. But that is not the end of the story.

You see, after my friend saw a doctor for the first time in more than two decades, she was told she was diabetic. Fortunately, Kappy had stayed in touch. She drove her to doctor appointments and helped get the critical medications she needed. It probably saved

her life. That is who Kappy is—always going above and beyond the call of duty. She has a great heart and pours it into everything she does.

I want to thank Steve—Kappy’s husband of more than 56 years—their children: Steve, Carole, Tim, Susie, and 18 grandchildren—for sharing so much of their wife, mother, and grandmother with the community. I also want to thank the entire Scates family, who have lived in the Shawneetown area since the early 1800s. You can’t set foot in southern Illinois without running into a member of the Scates family. They are the heartbeat of one of the best parts of our State. The Scates family farm is a well-known and respected family operation. In fact, it is not only one of the largest family farms in Illinois, it is known as one of the best. Throughout the years, the Scates family support and generosity have meant more than I can express in words.

I will close with this. I believe in the role of public service to make a difference. Kappy’s years of service reflect that, too. Our Nation needs more people like Kappy Scates. I couldn’t be more proud of the work she has done—and the person she is. I am honored to congratulate her on a job well done, and I am lucky to count her as a friend. I wish Kappy, Steve, and her family all the best.

NOMINATION OF MERRICK GARLAND

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I have served in this Chamber for 42 years and served as chairman or ranking member of the Judiciary Committee for nearly two decades. I have seen a lot of debates, even contentious ones, and good-faith disagreements between Senators. But what Senate Republicans did this year to shut down Chief Judge Merrick Garland’s nomination to the Supreme Court—well, it might be the most outrageous act of obstruction and irresponsibility that I have seen in my entire time in the Senate. It is a dangerous step toward politicizing our highest Court, in a judicial system that long has been the envy of the world.

Now that there is a Republican President about to be sworn in, I predict that all of a sudden we will hear Republicans talking about the importance of the Supreme Court having its full nine Justices. But make no mistake, these will be the same Senators who turned their backs on the Court and the American people for nearly a year by refusing to fill the vacancy since February.

Senate Republicans cared more about preserving that vacancy for a Republican president than they did about an independent Supreme Court. The result was that they blocked one of the most qualified Supreme Court nominees in this Nation’s history. Chief Judge Garland is an exceptional jurist with a stellar record and impeccable credentials. He has the most Federal judicial

experience of any Supreme Court nominee ever. Republicans and Democrats alike have recognized Chief Judge Garland as a brilliant and impartial judge with unwavering fidelity to the rule of law. In this day and age, he was as much of a consensus Supreme Court nominee as one could find. The senior Republican Senator from Utah and former chairman of the Judiciary Committee has previously noted that he would be confirmed easily. It is not hard to see why Chief Judge Garland has received significant bipartisan support in the past. When the American Bar Association reviewed his nomination, it unanimously awarded him its highest rating of “Well-Qualified.” To reach that rating, lawyers from across the country assessed his integrity, professional competence, and temperament. One said, “Garland is the best that there is. He is the finest judge I have ever met.” Another said “He is a judge’s judge, with a very high standard and legal craftsmanship, a fine sense of fairness to all parties, a measured and dignified judicial temperament, and the highest respect for law and reasoned argument.” One even said that Chief Judge Garland “may be the perfect human being.”

And yet Republicans have refused to provide him with any process whatsoever—no hearing, no vote. The result is that Chief Judge Garland is now the longest pending Supreme Court nominee in history. No Supreme Court nominee has ever been treated this way. Republicans set a new standard this year. It is the American people who have been harmed and spurned by this unprecedented blockade.

Until this year, Senate Judiciary Committee members had always taken their responsibility seriously. Ever since the Judiciary Committee started holding public confirmation hearings of Supreme Court nominees more than a century ago, the Senate has never denied a Supreme Court nominee a hearing and a vote.

Even when a majority of the committee has not supported a Supreme Court nominee, the committee has still sent the nomination to the floor so that all 100 Senators can fulfill their constitutional role of providing advice and consent on Supreme Court nominees. When I became chairman of the Judiciary Committee in 2001 during the Bush administration, I and Senator Hatch—who was then the ranking member—memorialized in a letter this longstanding tradition regarding Supreme Court nominees. The current Republican leadership has broken with this century of practice to make its own shameful history. But Senate Republicans have spent 8 years insisting on a different set of rules for President Obama.

Republicans rolled the dice this year, subjecting the Supreme Court and the American people to their purely political gamble. They will tell us they have won. But there is no victor—for their partisan game, this body, the Supreme